

Daniel J. Gaudet

Testimonial

State Board of Education

Public Hearing

At

Department of Education

100 Riverview Plaza

Trenton, NJ 08629

September 12, 2018

I would like to thank the New Jersey Board of Education, for giving me this opportunity to tell my story to this notable board, in this historic city of Trenton NJ.

I would like to start by saying;

I'm not qualified to say that a Charter School is any better than a Public School or that a Public School is any better than a Charter School.

But I hope my story; my family's story will help this distinguished board make its decision.

My daughter, at age 6, has Post Traumatic Stress Disorder because of a savage dog attack that almost took my wife and baby girl from me forever.

My daughter attended a public city kindergarten.

At our first parent/teacher conference, in February of 2017, I find out that my daughter is crying up to a DOZEN times a day.

So I asked the teacher "do the other children in the class cry that much".

The answer "no most don't cry at all".

I was crushed!!!!

My daughter started school in September it's now February and this is the first time I'm learning that Caleigh is crying a DOZEN times a day!

As a father, I needed to help my daughter, but I didn't know how.

The school gave me phone numbers of agencies that they said could help; I called all of them, and most went straight to an answering machine.

When someone did answer the phone:

I would tell them my story,

My wife and daughter were attacked by a pit bull.

My daughter was 4 years old, she received 50 plus stitches.

My wife, my hero, she saved Caleigh's life that day.

My Wife received 180 plus stitches all on her face and head.

My daughter has nightmares, she is scared all the time, and if she sees a dog, she has a total meltdown.

The agents that answered or called back were very nice and honest with me; they didn't know how to help.

We tried family therapy, which only made things worse.

In early spring of 2017 we received a flyer from iLearn Schools.

I found that I had choice.

I applied to, Bergen, Passaic, Paterson and Hudson Arts and Science Charter Schools.

Hopeful that we could find the assistance we needed to help my baby.

Late April, I receive a call from iLearn Schools informing us that my daughter, Caleigh Belle Gaudet had been selected for admission at the Passaic Arts and Science Charter School Clifton Campus.

I was very excited, but I was also concerned that they may not have the resources needed to help my daughter.

Caleigh's first day of 1st grade at the Clifton Campus

That morning when we got ready for school and on the way to school Caleigh was very frightened, almost terrified.

We walked into the gymnasium;

Caleigh held my hand so tight I couldn't feel my fingers; she was also gripping her Mother's hand the same way.

I knew that she was about to have a meltdown.

So I looked around the room for someone that could help us.

I saw the director, Ms. Roman walking toward us.

I stopped her and explained to her our situation and asked for help.

She told me "I got this"

Then she turned to Caleigh and said "Hi! My name is Ms. Roman and your name is?" Caleigh answers in a soft voice "Caleigh"

Ms. Roman asks "Caleigh would you like to be my little helper" my little girl, in a strong confident voice said "YES".

Ms. Roman took Caleigh's hand and the two of them were off into the crowd of teachers and students.

My Wife and I looked at each other in amazement!

"WOW" we both knew at that moment that we had found the right school.

I could see the deep compassion that Ms. Roman had for all the students that day.

At the start of school Ms. Roman, director of the Clifton Campus greets each and every student, every day and she knows all their names.

And that is just the beginning.

In time I would find that all the staff and faculty had the same deep compassion for all the students

But they don't treat them like they are just students; they are all treated like family.

No longer does Caleigh cling to my or my wife's hands trembling in fear or nervous of what's ahead of her.

What I see each day is a young girl who struts into school, with her head held high.

With the mentality she has got this. And she is going to endure through whatever obstacle is in her way.

The awards that Caleigh has received in the 1st grade reinforces that we have made the right choice.

She was awarded:

The Certificate of Recognition exemplifying the core value of Honesty

The Certificate of Recognition academic excellence in the subject of English Language Arts

She was one of Ms. Roman's Reading Rockets

And also she received the Panther Pride Participation Award, Go panthers!!

Caleigh started 2nd grade, two and a half week ago. She loves it.

She was the first in her class to reach 25 Dojo points, now she is a member of the "25 Dojo Points Club".

My Wife and I are so proud.

iLearn Schools gave me a choice, and that choice has changed my life and the life of my family forever.

My name is Daniel Gaudet and I

Thank you all, for listening to my story.